

Enhancing Early Care and Education



Research to Practice



University of Kentucky and University of Louisville KIDS NOW Evaluation Project
Sponsored by Kentucky Department of Education

WHAT WE KNOW¹:

Overall, quality in center-based early care and education classrooms in Kentucky has decreased.

- Quality scores of early care and education programs participating in STARS for KIDS NOW have increased.
- Infant/toddler classrooms are superior in quality when compared to the preschool classrooms.
- The quality of care and education is lowest in programs that serve large numbers of children on subsidy and minority children, although these programs are increasingly participating in the early care and education components of the Initiative.
- Participation levels in the STARS for KIDS NOW component has decreased.

Familiarity with, and participation in the early care and education components of the KIDS NOW Initiative are related to overall center quality.

- Director and teacher familiarity with the Initiative

are positively related to higher classroom quality, less staff turnover, more educated staff, and better staff benefits.

Quality differences exist between program types.

- NAEYC and Head Start programs had the highest scores on all environmental measures
- Head Start provided the greatest number of staff benefits, achieved the highest STARS for KIDS NOW ratings, participated more on local Community Early Childhood Councils, and demonstrated superior language and literacy environments scores.
- NAEYC accredited programs had better staff benefits, higher ITERS-R scores and higher STARS for KIDS NOW ratings than for-profit centers.
- Non-profit centers had the highest ITERS-R scores.

Positive language and literacy environments.

- Director and staff education levels, as well as level of familiarity with the KIDS NOW Initiative were related to positive language and literacy environment scores.

Urban and rural differences exist.

- Rural centers were more familiar with, and were more likely to participate in the early care and education components of the KIDS NOW Initiative, and have higher quality literacy instruction scores.
- Urban centers were more likely to have staff participating in the scholarship program.

WHAT WE NEED TO DO:

Higher Education and Training/Technical Assistance Entities

- Design and implement creative options in the delivery of professional development for child care providers, particularly for those in

rural areas. Specifically, professional development opportunities need to be offered at times and locations compatible with providers' work schedules.

- Focus coursework, training, and technical assistance efforts on *how* to assess and improve instruction for young children. Align courses with the Early Childhood Core Content. Embed the Kentucky Early Childhood Standards, the Kentucky Early Childhood

Assessment Guide, and the Early Childhood Quality Self-Study in course work and training, thus increasing the likelihood of improving positive outcomes for young children.

- Identify creative strategies to work with target programs that serve large numbers of children who live in poverty and have large minority populations. Seek ways to provide knowledge and skills to early childhood educators in those centers on how to work with



Child Care Directors

- Consider career ladders as well as other professional incentives that would support the staff to remain with programs once they advance in their educational level. An example might include wage increases utilizing STARS for KIDS NOW quality incentive monies.
- Take advantage of professional development opportunities that are available to you, across the state, at little or no charge. (Director's Credential, Director's Workshops/Seminars, Director's Dial-A-Discussion).
- Participate in, and encourage participation of your staff in the early care and education components of the KIDS NOW Initiative. Doing so increases the likelihood that the quality of care and education you provide to young children will improve, that staff will remain employed by your center, and ultimately that children will achieve positive outcomes.
- Share strategies for improving early care and education quality with other directors at regional and state meetings. Some specific areas that would be useful to directors would be how to improve the language and literacy environment of centers and how to leverage federal and state resources to provide high quality infant/toddler care.
- Support staff to improve the quality of the services they provide young children and their families by using the Early Childhood Core Content move staff forward on their professional growth plans.

Child Care Providers

- Access the KIDS NOW scholarship program to increase your knowledge about how children learn and develop, and learn new skills to improve the daily curriculum for the young children with whom you work.

- Seek available resources for improving services to minority children and those who live in poverty, as they are presently receiving the lowest quality of care. Resources include Infant/Toddler Specialists, Quality Coordinators, Healthy Start Consultants, Mental Health Specialists, Child Care Resource and Referral Agencies, Early Childhood Regional Training Centers, First Steps providers and First Steps Technical Assistance Teams.
- Share your expertise with other early childhood professionals. If you are working in a center that is participating in the STARS for KIDS NOW Program, consider presenting information at local, regional and state conferences on how to enhance children's development and learning.
- If you are working in a 3 or 4 STAR for KIDS NOW center, consider seeking your Early Childhood Trainer's credential as an avenue for sharing your expertise with others and enhancing your own professional growth.
- Share information with families about the importance of quality early care and education experiences, and ways they can enhance their child's development at home. Access available resources for doing so such as *Keys to Great Parenting and the Parent Guides to the Kentucky Early Childhood Standards*.
- Work with the director to develop a professional growth plan that is linked to the Early Childhood Core Content that will result in increased knowledge and skills, and improved child outcomes.

Professional Resources:

Buyse, V. & Wesley, P.W. (2004). Stage by stage: a framework for understanding the consultation process. *Young Exceptional Children*, vol. 7, p. 2.

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- Freeman, N.K. (2001). Early childhood education: tools for becoming a profession. *Dimensions of Early Childhood*, vol.29, p.11.
- Hesse, P., Lane, F. (2003). Media literacy starts young: an integrated curriculum approach. *Young Children*, vol.58, p. 20.
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- Rapport, M.J.K., McWilliam, R.A., Smith, B.J. (2004). Practices across disciplines in early childhood. *Infants & Young Children: An Interdisciplinary Journal of Special Care Practices*, vol.17, p. 32.
- Shireen-Desouza, J.M. & Staley, L.M. (2002). The Reggio Emilia philosophy inspires scientific inquiry: a professional development model. *Dimensions of Early Childhood*, vol. 30, p. 3.
- Warner, L. (2003). Planning effective classroom discovery centers. *Dimensions of Early Childhood*, vol. 31, p. 22.
- Wasik, B.A. (2001). Teaching the alphabet to young children. *Young Children*, vol.56, p. 34.
- No Author (2003). For further reading on teaching and learning about literacy. *Young Children*, vol. 58, p. 62.

For Regional Training Centers and Information
Go to the Kentucky Dept. of Education Website at:
www.education.ky.gov/KDE
click on Early Childhood

Also you can locate links of interest from this website: [www.education.ky.gov/KDE/
Instructional+Resources/
Early+Childhood+Development/
Early+Childhood+Development++
Links+of+Interest.htm](http://www.education.ky.gov/KDE/Instructional+Resources/Early+Childhood+Development/Early+Childhood+Development++Links+of+Interest.htm)

Or call the KDE- Division of Early Childhood:
1-800-533-5372

Additional Website Information:

Professional Development:
[www.nccic.org/pubs/goodstart/selected-res-profdev.
pdf](http://www.nccic.org/pubs/goodstart/selected-res-profdev.pdf)

Research:
<http://childcaresearch.org>

Partnerships:
www.cccic.org/quilt/

Child Care Development Fund:
[www.acf.hhs.gov/programs/ccb/geninfo/ccdfdesc.
htm](http://www.acf.hhs.gov/programs/ccb/geninfo/ccdfdesc.htm)

Child Care Resource and Referral:
www.kaccrra.net

